THE SIMILARITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS
IN
THE THREE MAJOR WORKS OF GÜNTER GRASS

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THESIS STATEMENT

It is the writer's objective to investigate thoroughly the two novels of Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Years*, and his novella, *Cat and Mouse*, in order to reveal the similarities and relationships existing therein. In addition, the writer wishes to reach a decision as to whether these works are to be considered a trilogy, or, as it has been stated, whether they were written as separate works involving three generations, each of which carries significance in itself.
INTRODUCTION

It has been a not infrequent accusation upon the German world of culture that there are no more giants of literature as Thomas Mann. There could not be a more untrue statement, for out of the aftermath of wartime cataclysms has arisen another giant: the artist and writer Günter Grass.

Grass was born in 1927 in Danzig. Sculptor, draftsman, playwright, and poet, he lives at present in Berlin with his Swiss wife and their children. He has just completed a play, The Plebeians Rehearse Their Insurrection, that has as its subject the workers' rising in East Berlin in 1953.

In April of 1965 the present writer heard Grass read from his own works. From his dark eyes emerges a sour-sweet glistening of light: the wisp of humour in a permeating, perpetuating spirit of genius. This work is the result of the writer's efforts to pay due homage to the dynamic, shattering, explosive writings of Günter Grass.
Danzig and its petty bourgeoisie hold the scene throughout the novella *Cat and Mouse*. The hero, Mahlke, is set apart from the other boys by a large, protruding cartilage, a huge Adam's apple. When the story begins, Mahlke is fourteen years old, and his fate has already made itself known in the first chapter, for he is doomed. His unusual excrescence of cartilage becomes an object of prey for a caretaker's black cat. The Second World War has begun as Mahlke reaches his fourteenth year. He is an only child and an orphan; Mahlke's father is dead. At about this time in the novella, or shortly hereafter, mention is made of a somewhat inconspicuous, not obsequious brat:

... and in the midst of this spawn which would now be twenty-three years old, beneath the solicitous eyes of the grown-ups, a little brat, who must have been about three, pounded monotonously on a child's tin drum, turning the afternoon into an infernal smithy—whereupon we took to the water.¹

In such a manner Grass refers to the hero of his first novel, *The Tin Drum*. Nevertheless, the activities of young boyhood are not the opening scenes of this novel, as they are in *Cat and Mouse*, for Oskar is an inmate of a mental hospital. The novel uses as an actual starting point the factual

background of Oskar Matzerath's maternal grandmother, Anna Bronski. From the potato fields of Kashubia, Oskar traces his lineage and arrives at the Vistula. Baptized in the Catholic Church, Oskar holds much affection for the Virgin Mary:

I called her blessed, full of grace, virgin of virgins, mother of divine grace, Thou blessed amongst women, Thou who are worthy of all veneration, Thou who hast borne the . . . , mother most amiable, most inviolate, virgin most renowned, let me savor the sweetness of the name of Jesus as Thou savoredst it in thy heart, for it is just and meet, right and for our salvation, Queen of Heaven, thrice-blessed . . . .

Likewise, this divine lady takes on a stronghold of adoration for Mahlke:

Though later there may have been rumors and tangible evidence to the contrary, the fact is that the only woman Mahlke cared about was the Catholic Virgin Mary. It was for her sake alone that he dragged everything that can be worn and displayed on the human neck to St. Mary's Chapel. Whatever he did, from diving to his subsequent military accomplishment, was done for her or else---yes, I know, I'm contradicting myself again---to distract attention from his Adam's apple.  

Similarly, Walter Matern, one of the heroes of *Dog Years*, is baptized in the Catholic Church. Although the offspring of a Protestant woman, Walter is, in the beginning, a product of his grandmother's religion, i.e., Catholicism. It is not coincidental that the Baltic Sea Coast, the Vistula, and

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especially the city of Danzig, the native city of Grass, recall that glorious era of Prussian militarism and the once resplendent glory of the Junker class in the three works.

In *Dog Years* Grass shows Matern as a child wandering along the banks of the Vistula with a dog and a friend named Eduard Amsel. Senta, the dog, is a very important character to the theme of the novel, and her pedigree is repeated again and again, like an incantation, as the two boys grow up, and grow apart. Senta has produced Harras, and Harras has sired Prinz, and Prinz has been presented by the Nazi Party and the German population of the city of Danzig to Hitler. This evolution is very well managed; Grass gives a convincing picture of the way in which the unthinkable becomes, in the right social conditions, the perfectly proper and acceptable. The river of "what everybody else is doing" sweeps Matern along until it seems wholly natural to him to betray his friend and to take a hand in knocking all his teeth out.

Walter Matern and Eduard Amsel were born in 1914 in the months of April and March respectively. Oskar Matzerath was born in the approximate vicinity in the year 1924, and Joachim Mahlke was born shortly after 1925.

"... and my keeper's eye is the shade of brown that can never see through a blue-eyed type like me."4 It is in this and following descriptions that the hero could easily

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assume the main characteristics of Hitler's pure "Aryan race" (blond hair, blue eyes, etc.). Mahlke adds to this description: "... those of us who had blond hair were transformed into towheads. While we followed the ships north of the beacon, he looked unswervingly downward: reddened, slightly inflamed lids with sparse lashes, I think; light-blue eyes which filled with curiosity only under water."^5

In the beginning it is Walter Matern's fists which are most noticed and which even moreso later exemplify the strength in the ideal Aryans (their "model" was Siegfried): "... and only slowly did the children in the villages to the right and left of the Vistula get it through their heads that anyone who wanted to pick a bone with young Amsel would have Walter Matern to reckon with."^6 Grass' three heroes here described have physical properties in common, and Walter Matern is especially imbued with a pugnacious penchant which characterized the entire Nazi regime.

From Grass' triangle of novels emerges, even at the beginnings, a further triangle, each one revealing a three-fold relationship as well as a purpose in their singular existence. In The Tin Drum the triangle is formed by Bruno Münsterberg, Oskar's "keeper," Oskar, and his instrument of first and last importance, the tin drum. In Cat and Mouse

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the triangle is revealed by Heini Pilenz who writes and must write Mahlke's story: "And now it is up to me, who called your mouse to the attention of this cat and all cats, to write ... Between me and Mahlke the caretaker's black cat tensed for a leap. We formed a triangle."

In *Dog Years* it is Brauxel who begins the first of the three-part novel. In the onset as in the end of the novel, three characters are formed against the "ever-setting sun":

Walter Matern wraps his right hand in the lower frayed edge of his sweater. Senta stands on four legs between the two of them. Her tongue hangs out to leftward and twitches. She keeps looking at Walter Matern, because his teeth. He has that from his grandmother who was riveted to her chair for nine years and only her eyeballs. Now they have taken off: one taller, one smaller on the dike top against the ferry landing. The dog black. Half a pace ahead: Amsel. Half a pace behind: Walter Matern. He is dragging Amsel's rags. Behind the bundle, as the three grow smaller on the dike, the grass gradually straightens up again.

The three primary centers of Grass' works are Danzig, the Baltic Sea Coast (the Vistula), and the city of Düsseldorf (and Cologne to some extent). From 1946 to 1949 Grass attended the Academy of Art at Düsseldorf, and in *The Tin Drum* the chapter "Madonna 49" reveals much of the art student's life during those chaotic and despairing times. It is here that Oskar meets Ulla and describes her: "She was hardly more than a child, long-legged and very drunk ... She had came as an

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angel and had on a hat molded from the variety of cardboard that is used for shipping eggs ... she still exerted the somewhat artsy-craftsy charm of a dweller in heaven ... "9

This little creature, Ulla, at first masochistic in her desires to remain the slave and outlet for the cruel Lankes, becomes a Muse and model for the students in the art school.

Although somewhat similar in physical build, this Ulla could never be the same Tulla as presented in *Dog Years* and *Cat and Mouse*. Tulla, a "capricious water-nymph," has a personality quite different from Ulla's; for Ulla tends to withdraw and be subservient to others' wishes. Tulla, however, displays a strong penchant for the grotesque even in her games:

When Tulla was with us, we had to collect leeches from the inlet in a tin can ... But the swan house belonged neither to the brewery nor to the air-raid defense; the swan house ... belonged to Tulla. In it she spent whole afternoons, and we handed the cans with the leeches in to her. She undid her clothing and applied them; on the belly and the legs. The leeches swelled up, turned blue-black like blood blisters, trembled slightly and ever more slightly, and as soon as they were full and easily detachable, Tulla, now green about the gills, tossed them into a second tin can.

... Tulla cooked her leeches and ours over a small wood fire until they were done; then they burst, and despite the nettled cooked up with them, colored the soup a brownish black. We had to drink the muddy broth; for to Tulla the cooking of leeches was sacred.10


Tulla had no whims whatsoever about the pain or discomfort which her desires might bring on her playmates. This Tulla in Dog Years is already known to the reader, for she is the same playmate of Joachim Mahlke and his friends in Cat and Mouse. In fact, she is just like a boy with her legs like "toothpicks." This scrawny little girl who always swam with Mahlke and his crowd showed no signs whatsoever of embarrassment when the boys decided to shed their swimming trunks and to lie on the ground naked. Besides the physical characteristics and the name, this Tulla loves the same crude games as known in Dog Years:

Calmly her chin in the cup of her hand, Tulla would look on when Winter or Esch, unable to contain himself, produced his modest offering. Hunching over so that the bones of her spine stuck out, she would gaze at Winter, who was always slow in getting there, and mutter: "Man, that's taking a long time!" But when, finally, the stuff came and splashed on the rust, she would begin to fidget and squirm, make little rat's eyes and look and look, try to discover heaven-knows-what, turn over, sit up, rise to her knees and her feet, stand slightly knock-kneed over the mess, and begin to stir it with a supple big toe, until it foamed rust-red: "Boy! That's the berries! Now you do it, Atze."11

To prove that her identity is one and the same in both works, one has only to read the descriptions in both. The one which appears first in Cat and Mouse is carried into much more detail in Dog Years:

Bone glue, carpenter's glue! . . . But most generously he garnished his daughter with his

He patted her with gluey fingers. He sprayed the child with particles of glue whenever he conjured up finger bunnies for her benefit. In short, the glue god metamorphosed Tulla into a glue maiden; for wherever Tulla went stood ran, wherever she had stood, wherever she had gone, whatever space she had traversed at a run, whatever Tulla took hold of, threw away, touched briefly or at length, wherever she had walked or served, wherever she took hold or shook loose, wherever she played with: shavings nails hinges, every place and object that Tulla had encountered retained a faint to infernal and in no wise to be quenched smell of bone glue.12

Although Tulla's entrance and participation in Cat and Mouse is not unimportant, her character is continued in much greater detail in Dog Years, and she is quite active throughout the novel. Through all, however, she retains that same coldness and indifference which she displays during childhood. Her penchant for lewd, vulgar pleasures repeats itself in her strong desire to have a baby during her early teens. This desire was so strong that it outruled any preference as to whom Tulla would choose for a partner in her new game.

In all three works the children's game are lewd, vulgar, and obscene. They reflect the culminating point of grotesque imagination.

Grass, as a writer, combines every element of writing in his three novels: lasciviousness, obscenity, indelicacy, lubricity, eroticism, and the fascinating charm of blasphemy along with the power of humor. All of these elements occur in episodes which are permeated with an effect of historicity.

12Günter Grass, Dog Years (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 120.
The story of Oskar, Grass' hero of The Tin Drum, is that of a mongrel's autobiography created from fiction. Nevertheless, through fiction Oskar can become the nucleus of a huge molecule, for through fiction Oskar can reveal the world at the same time that it reveals itself. All of this is done by Grass in a truly humorous manner, but never once can the reader say that he really has "discovered" Oskar's true personality. Oskar, in all reality, doesn't exist, or better said, he only exists through his creator, i.e., the novelist Günter Grass. Grass has awakened Oskar to life. The reader doesn't come face to face with Oskar's soul. Nevertheless, Oskar takes the reader and Grass, as well, on a journey to show what cannot be seen by the normal person. A product of fantasy and comparable to a most abominable monster, Oskar begins to destroy, step by step, that which the author has put before him.

In the very same manner, Grass has created the characters of his novella, Cat and Mouse. The narrator admits this:

And now it is up to me, who called your mouse to the attention of this cat and all cats, to write. Even if we were both invented, I should have to write. Over and over again the fellow who invented us because it's his business to invent people obliges me to take your Adam's apple in my hand and carry it to the spot that saw it win or lose. And so, to begin with, I make the mouse bob up and down above the screwdriver . . .

Grass has made his puppet's mouth begin, just as the puppet,

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in turn, makes Mahlke's story run its course of events. The characters were, therefore, created, or "invented," to be more precise. They were "made." Since the subject who acts is Grass, the objects who are at least partially acted upon are the characters Oskar and Mahlke.

It is with a black cat that the narrator begins his task of telling the story of the Great Mahlke. At first, and throughout the larger part of the book, the reader isn't even acquainted with the narrator's name. Not until page 107 does the reader learn his name when, finally, he himself says:

I, Pilenz—what has my first name got to do with it?—formerly an altar boy dreaming of every imaginable future, now secretary at the Parish Settlement House, just can't let magic alone; I read Eloy, the Gnostics, Böll, Friedrich Heer, and often with profound emotion the Confessions of good old St. Augustine. Over tea brewed much too black, I spend whole nights discussing the blood of Christ, the Trinity, and the sacrament of penance with the Franciscan Father Alban, who is an open-minded man though more or less a believer. I tell him about Mahlke and Mahlke's Virgin, Mahlke's neck and Mahlke's aunt, Mahlke's sugar water, the part in the middle of his hair, his phonograph, snowy owl, screwdriver, woolen pompoms, luminous buttons, about cat and mouse and mea culpa.\(^\text{14}\)

The author has set a distance between himself and the narrator, a fact which enables him to present, represent, and narrate incidents and occurrences from the nearest presence through the means of a "guilt-feeling" and, at the same time, to render things objective through a soft, light, indirect "questioning." And each of Grass' heroes has a similar

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 107 f.
"tool," i.e., a reason for writing their stories. Pilenz has his guilt complex, Oskar has his drum. For Pilenz the guilt complex becomes the tool which forces him to write the story.

In *Dog Years* three persons tell the story of the Führer's dog, Prinz, in settings and incidents which, in turn, bring to light and explode the bitter tragedies, ironies, and sardonic humor of the history of World War II as well as World History itself. The center, the nucleus of the novel is the history, the story, of the dog; Grass lets it fall as softly as the biblical retracing of generations. In light parody Grass, the omnipotent master of the world of eels, black cats, leeches, teeth, tin drums, guilt-complexes, ad infinitum, writes in the soft, reverberating tone of the Bible:

There was once a dog, his name was Perkun, and he belonged to a Lithuanian miller's man who had found work on the Vistula delta. Perkun survived the miller's man and sired Senta. The bitch, Senta, who belonged to a miller in Nickelswalde, whelped Harras. The stud dog, who belonged to a carpenter in Danzig-Langfuhr, covered the bitch Thekla, who belonged to a Herr Leeb, who died early in 1942, shortly after the bitch Thekla. But the dog Prinz, sired by the shepherd male Harras and whelped by the shepherd bitch Thekla, made history: he was given to the Führer and Chancellor for his birthday and, because he was the Führer's favorite dog, shown in the newsreels.15

The concise and accurate references to the dog's ancestors, as well as the repetition of these facts, become woven into

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the pattern of a type of fable. The fable of Prinz's ancestry is woven, blended, in turn, into the story, but the dog is, nevertheless, the "central" figure, i.e., the purpose of the three persons' writing. Hence, the age of dog years stands central to the novel; furthermore, this fable or plot refers, in a closer sense, to a segment, an era of Germany's history, i.e., her most recent history: the time from 1935 to 1955.

It is now the writer's purpose to investigate the times set for the other two works. Oskar was born in 1924. His story, however, is traced by his own words back to the year 1899 when his mother was begotten. It is the writer's belief that Oskar comes to an end on his thirtieth birthday although the significance of his story and its grotesque details live on and on and on. Therefore, Oskar's narration, at times dictated to his keeper Bruno Münsterberg, runs along the same time zone of Dog Years: 1924-1954. It thus encompasses the most recent historical period of Germany, i.e., up to and including Adenauer of whom the following mention is made at the close of the novel:

Nevertheless, we talked about the United Nations, collective guilt, Adenauer, and so on; but one of the green hats swept aside all our objections, which were without juridical foundation, he assured us, because the peace treaty had never been signed, or even drawn up. "I vote for Adenauer just the same as you do," he went on.16

In *Cat and Mouse* the first scene opens as a group of boys have gathered to play Schlagball. As it was the narrator's decision to offer the mouse, i.e., Mahlke's Adam's apple, to the cat, so it is his responsibility to carry the story of this sign of early maturity to the reader's attention. This he does by beginning after the outbreak of the war in 1939 at a time when Joachim Mahlke could neither swim nor ride a bicycle. The novella opens and closes on the same background: the waters of the Baltic. As Pilenz himself says: "Now that the scene of action has been identified as a point southeast of the Neufahrwasser harbor buoy, . . . "

Like the other two novels, *Cat and Mouse* is centralized around Danzig-Langfuhr, Osterzeile as well as Westerzeile. The story ends around 1959 in October, although Mahlke has disappeared some time before then. Thus, *Cat and Mouse* captures the events of Germany's and the world's most frightening era: pre-war to post-war times.

In the foregoing paragraphs it has been well established that Grass has set as at least one purpose to cover the events of the Second World War. It is the present writer's purpose to establish more similarities which occur in the three works, for it is through others besides the element of time that Grass binds his three works into one complete unity. It has been argued, for example, that the works were written

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as the stories of three generations, but this theory can easily be discounted by the fact of the years involved in the works.

It is indeed better to credit Grass' efforts toward a trilogy, i.e., a series of three literary works, each of which could form a completion in itself, but when together, they form one unified whole. It is now to be seen exactly what elements, characters, atmospheres, etc., bind the three works into one.

The Tin Drum and Dog Years are each divided into three distinct parts. The Tin Drum contains individual Books One, Two, and Three. The first book tells the events of Oskar's adolescence up until the age of fifteen when his friend, the toy merchant, is quieted and restrained from selling any more little tin drums for the rest of his life. He was a Jew.

"There was once a drummer, his name was Oskar. When they took away his toy merchant and ransacked the shop, he suspected that hard times were in the offing for gnomelike drummers like himself." And, finally, Oskar relates the bitter end of his adolescent days with the following, part irony, part tragedy:

As for me, they took away my toy merchant, wishing with him to banish all toys from the world.

There was once a musician, his name was Meyn, and he played the trumpet too beautifully for words.

There was once a toy merchant, his name was Markus and he sold tin drums, lacquered red and white.

There was once a musician, his name was Meyn and he had four cats, one of which was called Bismarck.

There was once a drummer, his name was Oskar, and he needed the toy merchant.
There was once a musician, his name was Meyn, and he did his four cats in with a fire poker.
There was once a watchmaker, his name was Laubschad, and he was a member of the SPCA.
There was once a drummer, his name was Oskar, and they took away his toy merchant.
There was once a toy merchant, his name was Markus, and he took all the toys in the world away with him out of this world.
There was once a musician, his name was Meyn, and if he isn't dead he is still alive, once again playing the trumpet too beautifully for words.\textsuperscript{19}

In this final chapter of the first book of \textit{The Tin Drum}, Grass lets his hero, Oskar, recapitulate, recapture, recalcitrata the preliminary events of his childhood and, moreover, lets him captivate the reader with his fairy-tale manner. In the end of this first book it is just beginning, i.e., the even more grotesque, lewd, violent happenings of the war. The date on which the toy merchant's shop was wrecked was November 9, 1938. It is the beginning of a grim reality, as described in this ending chapter. Nevertheless, Oskar, the "child-adult," sees the reality and relates it in the opposite form: a fairy tale. The chapter "Faith, Hope, and Love" carries its title in a familiar incantation, a biblical phrase quoted to nearly every child in his early years.

This chapter even takes its beginning in the primary words of a fairy tale: \textit{es war einmal} is the same as the opening to every fairy tale in English: "once upon a time."

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 205 f.}
In the preceding quotation from the ending pages of this chapter, every paragraph begins with these words: "There was once . . . " Every German child also knows the ending words to a fairy tale. English fairy tales end with these words: "And so, they lived happily ever after." In German fairy tales, however, these words are the final ones: "Und wenn er nicht gestorben ist, lebt er heute noch." "And if he isn't dead, he is still alive." With these words Oskar ends his happy, secure, drumming childhood on a note of bitter, realistic irony: "Es war einmal ein Musiker, der hiess Meyn, und wenn er nicht gestorben ist, lebt er heute noch und bläst wieder wunderschön Trompete."20

Thus it is that the polemic extremes fall into place, as so often in Grass' works, and the scene is set for the era ahead: the era of unbelievable, bitterly humorous, grotesque tragedy of wartime Germany, and, more particularly, the fantastic reality of the city of Danzig where Grass' hero dwells.

In Dog Years Grass is more precise about employing the same methods as those in The Tin Drum: "Morning shifts, love letters, Materniads: Brauxel and his coauthors have taken an example from someone who worked diligently all his life---on lacquered tin."21

In the first part of Dog Years, "morning shifts," the

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reader becomes acquainted, even confused, with the world of fairy tales, legends, parables, and historical myths as Brauxel guides him through the formative years of the two friends Eddi Amsel and Walter Matern. Nevertheless, the portentous signals of what is about to take place in Germany set the scene for the oncoming years. It is described in a "transitional passage" which serves to link up Brauxel's "morning shifts, the first part of Dog Years, to Harry Liebenau's "love letters:"

Tulla Pokriefke was born on June 11, 1927. When Tulla was born, the Danzig police band, conducted by chief bandmaster Ernst Stieberitz, gave a concert in the gardens of the Zoppot casino. When Tulla was born, the police, as their records for the eleventh of the month inform us, arrested seventeen persons. When Tulla was born, the Danzig delegation to the forty-fifth session of the League of Nations council arrived in Geneva. When Tulla was born, the Berlin stock exchange reported foreign buying of rayon and electrical industry stocks. Prices were generally firmer: Essen Anthracite: four and one-half points; Ilse and Stolberger Zinc: three points. Certain special securities also advanced. Glanzstoff opened at four points, Bemberg at two points above previous quotations. When Tulla was born, the NSDAP, Gau Danzig, called a monster mass meeting in the Sankt Josephshaus on Töpfergasse from five to eight. Party Comrade Heinz Haake of Cologne was to speak on the topic of "German workers of brawn and brain, unite!" On the day following Tulla's birth the meeting was to be repeated in the Red Room of the Zoppot casino under the motto: "Nation in distress: who will save it?" The poster was signed by a Herr Hohenfeld, member of the provincial diet, who called upon his fellow citizens to "Come in droves!" When Tulla was born, the book Being and Time had not yet appeared, but had been written and announced. When Tulla was born, Dr. Citron still had his practice in Langfuhr; later he was obliged to take refuge in Sweden.
... When Tulla was born, a child's rep dress cost two gulden fifty at Sternfeld's department store. Girls' "princess" slips two gulden sixty-five. A pail and shovel cost eighty-five gulden pfennigs. Watering cans one gulden twenty-five. And tin drums lacquered, with accessories, were on sale for one gulden and seventy-five pfennigs.

... When Tulla was born, Harras, her uncle's watchdog, was one year and two months old.22

In a fury of whimsical lines Grass begins this novel in a dialogue, a form which is not uncommon at all in his works. As a matter of fact, the most part of the works deal with all kinds of humorous, twisted, contorted words between persons. In a manner of stuttering and stammering words, the novel begins; it continues in this type of undulating, back-and-forth, up-and-down fashion to the very end. Perhaps it is only for the sake of form that Grass divides his novel among three authors who, in turn, form a "collective" authorship. At any rate, for show or for form, Grass hands out narrative parts to three people: to a peculiar manufacturer who "at the moment" bears the name of Brauxel, to a radio writer by the name of Harry Liebenau, and to the son of a miller, Walter Matern. Brauxel, who is not so particular at all about the way his name is written, states in the beginning: "Spieltrieb und Pedanterie diktieren und widersprechen sich nicht."23 The writer has quoted the statement from the German edition of Dog Years because the

22Ibid., p. 112 f.

English translation seems to be slightly varying. In no manner of denigration to Mr. Manheim, the translator of Grass' 700-page giants, the German word "Spieltrieb" can be translated in two ways. Mr. Manheim gives the following translation of the above sentence: "There is no contradiction between playfulness and pedantry; the one brings on the other." Besides the word "playfulness" "Spieltrieb" can be rendered in English as "aesthetic sense." The writer feels that both words could be used perfectly if applied to both the "alias" writer Brauxel and his creator Günter Grass. The statement applies to the author equally well because he splits himself into three self-created, self-willed ghost writers and, at the same time, never disowns or denies his originality nor does he spoil his magnificently whimsical power of creation throughout the novel. He begins it in a "headlong" plunge as to who will receive the task of narrating. The German quotation is here much more applicable because of the familiar and polite forms of the pronoun "you." Du and Sie; this is something which has been extinct in the English language for a number of years. The English translation of this quotation follows the German.


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Vor vielen vielen Sonnenuntergängen, lange bevor es uns gab, floss, ohne uns zu spiegeln, tagtäglich die Weichsel und endete immerfort. 25

You tell. No, you. Or you. Should the actor begin? Or the scarecrows, all at cross purposes? Or should we wait until the eight planets have collected in the sign of Aquarius? You begin, please. After all it was your dog. But before my dog, your dog and the dog descended from the dog. One of us has to begin: You or he or you or I... Many many sunsets ago, long before we existed, the Vistula flowed day in day out without reflecting us, and emptied forever and ever. 26

In his newest novel Grass has presented the reader with an improvement from the strict form of his earlier novella, Cat and Mouse. Cat and Mouse, in its brevity and compactness, focuses centrally on the fate of its hero, Joachim Mahlke. The novella can, though somewhat scantily, be divided into three parts, too. The first, running through the larger part of the book, takes the reader up to the summer of 1942 when Mahlke disappears from the little crew of boys who held their nearly constant rendez-vous down by the barge. With a firm doom, things seem to fall into place, and for Joachim Mahlke things fall to his fate. The pieces of his puzzle begin to fit together, quite slowly at first, then very rapidly. Then the little group loses their leader, the Great Mahlke:

... there was some mention of the barge which had its big day before the onset of the summer


vacation of '42, but whose glory paled in the course of the summer; for to this day that summer has a flat taste in my mouth---what was summer without Mahlke?

Not that we were really unhappy about his absence. I myself was glad to be rid of him, so I didn't have to chase after him the whole time; but why, I wonder, did I report to Father Gusewski as soon as school began again, offering my services at the altar?27

The question is really very simple answered, for Grass has caused Pilenz to chase after him; the effect is in the product of a guilt-complex on the part of Pilenz.

The second part of Cat and Mouse could begin when Mahlke volunteers for the submarines in World War II. And, with his own words, Mahlke throws the words of the beginning of his end in a curse which takes Pilenz through his life discipleship:

"Why wouldn't you think of the submarines? Well, at last! That's the only branch that still has a chance. Though of course I'll feel like an ass in one of those things and I'd rather do something useful or funny. You remember I wanted to be a clown. Lord, what ideas a kid will get! "I still think it's a pretty good idea. Otherwise things aren't so bad. Hell, school is school. What fool ideas I used to have. Do you remember? Just couldn't get used to this bump. I thought it was some kind of disease. But it's perfectly normal. I've known people, or at least I've seen some, with still bigger ones; they don't get upset. The whole thing started that day with the cat. You remember. We were lying in Heinrich Ehlers Field. A Schlagball tournament was going on. I was sleeping or daydreaming, and that gray beast, or was it black, saw my neck and jumped, or one of you, Schilling I think, it's the kind of thing he would do, took the cat... Well, that's ancient history."28


28Ibid., p. 124.
And the war then takes its course as reported by the narrator through the curiously strange, yet enchanting facilities of his creator:

. . . but Osterzeile, Westerzeile, Bärenweg, no, the whole of Langfuhr, West Prussia, or Germany for that matter, smelled in those war years of inions, onions stewing in margarine; I won't try to determine what else was stewing, but one thing that could always be identified was freshly chopped onions, although onions were scarce and hard to come by, although jokes about the onion shortage, in connection with Field Marshal Göring, who had said something or other about short onions on the radio, were going the rounds in Langfuhr, in West Prussia, and all over Germany. Perhaps if I rubbed my typewriter superficially with onion juice, it might communicate an intimation of the onion smell which in those years contaminated all Germany, West Prussia and Langfuhr, Osterzeile as well as Westerzeile, preventing the smell of corpses from taking over completely.29

Grass certainly has many talents for his profession, and one of those talents certainly is the ability to prevent the reader from growing bored. There are so many characters, events, descriptions of such events and characters that the reader must use all of his memory faculties to keep them in order. The three works move swiftly from one event, one character to another, and they, therefore, avoid giving the hero the entire spotlight to himself. Many have thought, and indeed wrongly so, that Grass' purpose is to confuse the reader with so many details, descriptions, etc., as possible. This is not true, for somewhere, though perhaps difficultly found at times, there is order to the entire work or works.

29Ibid., p. 127.
In *The Tin Drum* Oskar himself admits that his early days were spent in the midst, the center of a triangle:

There is still another picture which shows the three protagonists of my early years forming a triangle. Though it lacks the concentration of the balcony scene, it emanates the same tense peace, which can probably be concluded only among three persons. We may get pretty sick of the triangle situations in plays; but come to think of it, what can two people do if left to themselves on the stage except dialogue each other to death or secretly long for a third.\(^3^0\)

The three "protagonists" here are the hero's mother and father and a third "friend," Jan Bronski, who vied for his mother's attraction. This is, however, only a temporary "triangle," for the reader meets many more characters, and, like Oskar's mother, father, and Bronski, they all change and then fade away. The only character who remains the same throughout is Oskar. Grass employs the number "three" quite often, as shown in Oskar's comparison of the snapshot of his mother, father, and Bronski to a sort of triangle, a triumvirate of which he was the center.

For some time now I have been looking at a group picture taken shortly after the marriage. I have been compelled to take up my drum and drumsticks and, gazing at the faded brownish rectangle, attempt to conjure up the dimly visible three-cornered constellation.

The picture must have been taken in the Bronski flat in Magdeburger-Strasse not far from the Polish Students' House, for in the background we perceive a sunlit balcony of a type seen only in the Polish quarter, half-concealed by the vinelike foliage of pole beans. Mama is seated, Matzerath

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and Jan Bronski are standing. But how she sits and how they stand! For a time I foolishly tried to plot the constellation of this triumvirate---for she gave the full value of a man---with the help of a ruler, a triangle, and a school compass that Bruno had to go out for. Starting with the angle between neck and shoulder, I drew a triangle; I spun out projections, deduced similarities, described arcs which met significantly outside the triangle, i.e., in the foliage, and provided a point, because I needed a point of departure, a point of contact, a point of view.31

It is also shortly after this picture was taken that Oskar's penchant for the number "three" becomes, in reality, the age at which he achieves his lifetime stature, with the exception, of course, of the few inches he later acquires. In ironic, mythical, yet very startling reality, Oskar relates his decision, a result naturally of his own free will and determination.

Little people and big people, Little Claus and Great Claus, Tiny Tim and Carolus Magnus, David and Goliath, Jack the Giant Killer and, of course, the giant; I remained the three-year old, the gnome, the Tom Thumb, the pigmy, the Lilliputan, the midget, whom no one could persuade to grow. I did so in order to be exempted from the big and little catechism and in order not, once grown to five-foot-eight adulthood, to be driven by this man who face to face with his shaving mirror called himself my father, into a business, the grocery business, which as Matzerath saw it, would, when Oskar turned twenty-one, become his grownup world. To avoid playing the cash register I clung to my drum and from my third birthday on refused to grow by so much a finger's breadth. I remained the precocious three-year-old, towered over by grownups but superior to all grownups, who refused to measure his shadow with their, who was complete both inside and outside, while they, to the very brink of the grave, were condemned to

31 Ibid., p. 55.
worry their heads about "development," who had only to confirm what they were compelled to gain by hard and often painful experience, and who had no need to change his shoe and trouser size year after year just to prove that something was growing.

However, and here Oskar must confess to development of a sort, something did grow—and not always to my best advantage—ultimately taking on Messianic proportions; but what grownup in my day had eyes and ears for Oskar, the eternal three-year-old drummer.32

Thus Oskar reveals his purposes in a narration of the fairy-tale world based on realities, sometimes ugly realities of the grownups, e.g., their pseudo-characteristics, their blindness to the eyes and ears of little children who can permeate the lies and affectedness of the adult world.

Once again, Grass doesn't fail to combine those polemic extremes which pervade the entirety of his writing and to bind them into a completeness of irony which is life itself. The reader becomes a child once more; he slips away into the enchanting world of David and Goliath, the story of the little boy who slew the big, evil giant. Oskar is a David of sorts, but he is also a giant, an ogre. Yet if the reader rests on the dialogue to provide him with clues to Oskar's real character, he will not know Oskar any better than before.

In the preceding quotation, there is a phrase which the writer would like to examine in comparison to the German text. The quote is as follows: "I did so in order to be exempted from the big and little catechism and in order not.

32 Ibid., p. 60 f.
once grown to five-foot-eight adulthood, to be drive by this man . . ." The German text reads as such: " . . . um Unterscheidungen wie kleiner und grosser Katechismus enthoben zu sein, um nicht als einszweiundsiebzig grosser, so genannter Erwachsener, einem Mann . . ." 33 Once again in no manner of denigration to the translator's work, the text reads as follows: " . . . in order not, as a five-foot-eight, so-called (sogenannt) adult . . ." The reason why the writer has called this to the reader's attention is the word "so-called," for in Oskar's opinion, and in many others', "adulthood" doesn't exist in the sense of being a state of genuine maturity. There really aren't any such people as "true, genuine" adults. A "grown-up" is only the enlarged stature of a child. Oskar only retains the physical stature of a child, but is, according to himself, fully developed both inside and outside. As mentioned previously, Oskar is the embodiment of the world of fairy tales, but he is also the embodiment of the world of monsters. What makes him a monster? The present writer refers to a paragraph in the first book: "Here I've got it. I've got my drum." 34 The tin drum, the lacquered red and white drum, is his tool, but it is not his weapon. His weapon is the following: "With a solemnly resolute expression, I hold the sticks crossed over the top of it." 35 The German


35 Ibid.
text, however, renders a better interpretation to Oskar's weapon; the same sentence in German reads as the following: "Da kreuze ich selbstbewusst und unter ernst entschlossenem Gesicht hölzerne Trommelstücke auf dem Blech." It is the writer's purpose only to show the importance of one word: selbstbewusst. When Oskar refers to the picture, he speaks of himself as "self-assured, self-confident." The word in German, however, is the perfect word for Oskar, for it is not only his weapon, it is his strength. If one were to translate this word literally, i.e., selbstbewusst, one could render it "self-aware," a perfect adjective with which to describe Grass' hero!

As mentioned before, there is a sense of reality which pervades all, e.g., here in the quoted paragraph. Even if it is a not all too pleasant fact, Oskar's sexual development takes its normal course. What fairy tale includes factual developments of the growth of the hero's genitals as is done here in the closing paragraph of the chapter?

Thus, this little "David" (alias Oskar Matzerath), in all his angelic innocence, picks up his stone and throws it at the world of the grown-ups, as is stated in Dog Years:

"'Then little David picked up a zellack and flung it at the giant Goliath . . . ' For a zellack is a handy little stone, the size of a pigeon's egg." 37


In the second part of Dog Years, "love letters," Harry Liebenau, one of Grass' collective authors, writes to his cousin, Tulla, the same character first introduced in Cat and Mouse. The dog is the assumed reason for the writings of all three, but Liebenau doesn't continue, at first, in the same manner as Brauxel has written in the preceding "morning shifts." Liebenau writes as though the letters were to his cousin; nevertheless, his purpose is still to relate the happenings of the dog through the war years: "And the salutation---as though I were writing you one or a hundred letters---will be my formal crutch, which even now I would like to throw away, which I shall often and with fury in my arm throw into the Striessbach, into the sea, into Aktien Pond: but the dog, black on four legs, will bring it back as he has been trained to do."38 Thus, Harry Liebenau's purpose in writing is to carry out Brauxel's orders, i.e., to tell the dog's story in those war-ridden years.

Liebenau, however, doesn't continue, as in the previous part, to tell in words of rhyme, as Brauxel has done in the following example from the first part of Dog Years:

"Wear hooks and eyes,
Dear Jesus will save you.
Wear buttons and pockets,
The devil will have you."39

38 Ibid., p. 117.
39 Ibid., p. 15.
Liebenau, however, writes an epistolary novel:

Seventeen years later somebody picked me up with two fingers and put me into a life-size tank as an ammunition loader . . . Whereas hitherto I had never stopped searching for a word that would rhyme with you, Tulla, that tank backing into position and those screaming glasses showed your Cousin Harry the way to a rhymeless language: from then on I wrote simple sentences, and now that a certain Herr Brauxel has advised me to write a novel, I am writing a normal rhymeless novel.40

The first triangle, in this part, is made up of the author, Harry Liebenau, his cousin Tulla, and the dog. The next triangle involves two characters, one quite briefly, as she is only mentioned to the reader in Cat and Mouse:

The pompoms remind me of Papa Brunies, a pension teacher who had been recalled to his post during the war; he was delighted with the merry little things; once or twice, after Mahlke had given them up, he even tied a pair of them around his own stand-up collar, and thus attired declaimed Eichendorff: "Weathered gables, lofty windows . . ." or maybe it was something else, but in any case it was Eichendorff, his favorite poet. Oswald Brunies had a sweet tooth and later, ostensibly because he had eaten some vitamin tablets that were supposed to be distributed among the students, but probably for political reasons—Brunies was a Freemason—he was arrested at school. Some of the students were questioned. I hope I didn't testify against him. His adoptive daughter, a doll-like creature who took ballet lessons, wore mourning in public; they took him to Stutthof, and there he stayed—a dismal, complicated story, which deserves to be written, but somewhere else, not by me, and certainly not in connection with Mahlke.41

40 Ibid., p. 117 f.
That "somewhere else" and the someone else is Harry Liebenau who tells in *Dog Years* of the triangle formed by the teacher, Brunies, his daughter, adopted Jenny, and Amsel. The three formed a friendship. Moreover, it is Liebenau who admits that the "someone" who testified against Dr. Brunies was Tulla Pokriefke.

The story of how Jenny was "found" differs. To whomever writes of Stifter's painting a landscape with words, it takes on a mystic meaning; to Liebenau, however, the world of superstition doesn't exist. In comparing the two narrations of the event, Brauxel's description fits the rest of his writing: legends, parables, rhymes, myths, and fairy tales.

Thin, thin! Brauxel, the present writer, suffers from inability to describe unpeopled landscapes. He knows how to begin; but once he has brushed in a rolling hill, rich green, and behind it innumerable graduated hills à la Stifter, ending in the distant gray-blue of the horizon, and gone on to scatter the stones inevitable in the region around Meisterswalde, as the Devil did in his time, through his still unformed foreground; once he has put in the bushes that consolidate the foreground—the moment he says: juniper, hazelnut, broom glossy-green, underbrush, bushes, spherical bushes, thornbushes, bushes in the wind, whispering bushes—for in this region the wind is always blowing—he always itches to blow life into Stifter's wilderness. Brauksel says: And behind the third bush counting from the left, just a little above the one and one-half acres of feed beets, no, not the hazelnut bush—Oh, these wretched bushes!—there there there, below that lovely moss-covered stone, well anyway behind the third bush on the left, in the midst of this unpeopled landscape, a man is hidden.42

No, it isn't all Brauxel's description here, for as the "someone" said, Brauxel needs assistance. Who is it here that says Brauxel suffers from "inability to describe unpeopled landscapes?" Why is it that Brauxel specializes in peopled landscapes? It is because, as the reader later learns, Brauxel's specialty is exactly that of blowing life into the unpeopled. Here Brauxel has an assistant, even a creator, who sets the scene and then leaves it. That creator must be Grass; nevertheless, as usual, Grass does not always just create, he "leaves" it to his heroes to develop and fill. In this case, it is Brauxel who continues to "people" the landscape Grass has left to him:

Not a sower, Not the plowman so often seen in oil paintings. A man in his middle forties. Pale brown black impudent, hidden behind the bush. Hook-nosed, rabbit-eared toothless. This more, this man, has an angustri, a ring, on his little finger and in the course of future morning shifts, while the schoolboys are playing schlagball and Brunies is sucking his cough drop, he will take on importance, because he has a little bundle with him. What is in the bundle? Who is the man? He is Bidandengero the Gypsy, and the bundle whimpers.43

If nothing else, Grass gives his characters a kind of puppet-like free will, determination, and words, words, words!

Harry Liebenau, however, chose his beliefs in superstition very much unlike Brauxel. Just as he writes a "rhymeless" novel, something in ordinary words, everyday words, so he cannot quite believe such a "whopper" as the finding of Jenny.

43Ibid., p. 95.
Tulla and I never believed that Gypsies and storks had anything to do with the finding of Jenny. A typical Papa Brunies story: with him nothing happened naturally, everywhere he sniffed out hidden forces, he always managed to dwell in an eerie eccentric light. Whether feeding his mania for mica gneiss with every new and often magnificent specimens—there were similar cranks in cranky Germany with whom he corresponded—or, on the street, in the playground, or in his classroom, carrying on like an Old Celtic druid, a Prussian oak-tree god, or Zoroaster—he was generally thought to be a Freemason—he invariably displayed the association with the doll-like infant, that first made Dr. Brunies into an eccentric who acquired a standing not only within the precinct of the high school but also in Elsenstrasse and the streets intersecting or running parallel to it in the big little suburb of Langfuhr. 44

Perhaps Grass would use the little cliché: Birds of a feather flock together." He would, however, tear it up, dress it down, dress it up, dress it around, dress it over, and tear it down again, put it back together, and dress it again and again and again. Nevertheless, if the story that Brauxel exposes would hold truth, Jenny would be part of the Gypsies. Eddi Amsel is half-Jew. Papa Brunies was said to be a Freemason, but that wasn't all. Later he disobeyed; the excuse to take him away was that he hadn't distributed the vitamin tablets given him for the students. At first, Walter Matern is a fourth in this triangle; nevertheless, he was different. Even as children, Eddi Amsel and Jenny held a lot in common: he was a Jew, she a Gypsy, if the story is believed (it's the reader's choice, of course); they were also

44 Ibid., p. 121.
both very obese children.

Jenny was a fat child. Even when Eddi Amsel was roaming around Jenny and Brunies, she seemed no slimmer.

. . . For Tulla I am going to paint an early picture: I want to show you an elderly gentleman with a bulbous nose, innumerable wrinkles, and a broad-brimmed soft hat on ice-gray matted hair. He is striding along in a green loden cape. To the left and right of him two schoolboys are trying to keep up with him. Eddi Amsel is what is commonly known as a fatty. His clothes are full to bursting. His knees are marked with little dimples. Wherever his flesh is visible, a crop of freckles burgeons. The general impression is one of boneless waddling. Not so his friend: rawboned and masterful, he stands besides Brunies, looking as though the teacher, Eddi Amsel, and plump little Jenny were under his protection. 45

At first Matern's purpose, self-willed, is to protect Brunies, Jenny, and, most of all, his friend Eddi Amsel. Yet this protection doesn't last very long, for as said before, he is different than Eddi and Jenny.

At the age of five and a half the little girl is still lying in a large baby carriage, because she has walking difficulties. Brunies is pushing. Sometimes Eddi Amsel pushes, rarely the Grinder . . . Sometimes Eddi Amsel sucked a candy to keep him company. I never saw Walter Matern accept a candy. But Jenny's fingers were tenaciously sticky with rectangular cough drops as Tulla's fingers with the bone glue which she rolled into marbles and played with. 44

Mr. Liebenau continues to tell the story---on into the year, Hitler's year of crowning glory: 1933! The world of the unbelievable really sets in, and Liebenau tells it in such a manner.

43Ibid., p. 122.
44Ibid.
Oh Tulla,

how can I tell you about Koshnavia, about Harras and his scent marks, about bone glue, cough drops, and the baby carriage, when I have this compulsion to stare at my fist!—Yet roll it must. Once upon a time there rolled a baby carriage. Many many years ago there rolled a baby carriage on four high wheels. On four old-fashioned high wheels it rolled, enamelled black and hooded with cracking oil-cloth. Dull-gray spots where the chromium-plated spokes of the wheels, the springs, the handle to push it by, had peeled. From day to day the spots grew perceptibly larger: Past: Once upon a time. When in the summer of '33: in the days in the days when I was a boy of five, when the Olympic Games were being held in Los Angeles, fists were already being moved swift, dry, down to earth; and yet, as though unaware of the draft that was blowing, millions of baby carriages on wheels high and low were being propelled into the sunlight, into the shade.

As the confusion, the terror, the bitterness grows larger and larger, the world grows smaller and smaller, not only for the German people and their guilt, as mentioned here, but also for the heroes who are closed in, surrounded by what is taking place. Thus Liebenau resorts to rhymes to convey the incredible.

Pseudo captains aiming spyglasses. Or hands shading far-seeing eyes. So many sailor suits. So many children running, playing, hiding, and scaring each other. I see something you do not see. Enymeemyminymo. Sour herring one two three. There's Herr Anglicker from Neuer Markt with his twins. . . Herr Selke allows his sons, first one, then the other, to look through his spyglass: smoke trail, superstructure, the Kaiser is rising above the horizon. Herr and Frau Behrendt have used up their sea gull biscuit. Frau Grunau, who owns the laundry on Heeresanger, with her three apprentice girls. Scheffler the baker from Kleinhammerweg with giggling wife. Heini Pilenz and Hottent Sonntag without parents.

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46 Ibid., p. 127.
All of Grass' characters are here to witness Hitler's rise and his seizure of Germany.

Young girls who have taken their boy friends' arms and enterprising husbands, among them Herr Pokriefke, Herr Berendt, and Matzerath the grocer, join in the chorus. The northeast wind aligns the flags and smooths out the false notes in the merry song. Anyone who listens closely can hear, now below now above the singing, a child's tin drum. That must be the grocer's son. He isn't quite right in the head. "Gloriaviktoria" and "Wiedewiedewittjuchheirassa" is the refrain of the well-nigh interminable song. Little by little it becomes imperative to join in: "Why isn't he singing" . . . So come on! Chin up! Aren't Herr Zureck and Postal Secretary Bronski singing, though they both work at the Polish Post Office?47

The very same afternoon Mahlke and his disciples probably gathered together and swam out to the barge. It could very well have been an afternoon as described on page one of this work.

Shortly thereafter, in Liebenau's account of the beginning of the catastrophic end, there appears another familiar little character:

Not all the gulls follow her. Tulla acts; she throws back her head with its pigtails, lets it snap forward, and spits. Her cousin blushes to kingdom come. He looks around to see if anyone was looking when Tulla spat into the baby carriage. By the left-hand rail of the pier stands a three-year-old in a sailor suit. His sailor cap is encased in a silk ribbon with a gold-embroidered inscription: "HMS Seydlitz." The ends of the ribbon flutter in the northeast wind. At his side hangs a child's tin drum. From his fists grow battered wooden drumsticks. He doesn't drum, has blue eyes, and watches as Tulla spits a second time into the empty baby carriage. A multitude of summer shoes, canvas shoes, sandals, canes, and

47 Ibid., p. 129.
parasols approach from the end of the pier as Tulla takes aim a third time.48

Thus has Oskar once again succeeded—he has seen coming that which the "so-called" adults have not seen. He has seen many things, been witness to many events which others haven't seen. Any why should they listen to him? A child, an eternal three-year-old child? Nevertheless, he saw: "I don't know whether there was any other witness besides me and the grocer's son when my cousin spat three times in quick succession into Jenny's empty baby carriage and then shuffled off skinny angry slowly in the direction of the casino."49

It is not infrequent that Grass makes references to characters, places, and events which have occurred in his other two works. The school teacher, whom Oskar detested so much that he broke the windows as well as the lenses in her glasses when she tried to take away his tin drum, Fräulein Spollenhauer, is Harry Liebenau's teacher. She plays the same "role" in both novels: a pedantic, frightened, stern, old-maid, brainwashed, hypocritical, nonsensical, masculine school teacher. Oskar, unfortunately, sees through her affectedness. On his first school day, he imagines himself the teacher, as though he himself were educating his fellow pupils, and, for a moment, he feels sorry for Miss Spollenhauer.

48 Ibid., p. 132 f.
49 Ibid., p. 133.
For a time she watched my hands and drumsticks, I wouldn't even say that her manner was inept; she smiled self-forgetfully and tried to clap her hands to my beat. For a moment she became a not unpleasant old maid, who had forgotten her prescribed occupational caricature and become human, that is, childlike, curious, complex, and immoral. However, when she failed to catch my rhythm, she fell back into her usual rectilinear, obtuse, and to make matters worse underpaid role, pulled herself together as teachers occasionally must, and said: "You must be little Oskar. We have heard so much about you. How beautifully you drum! Doesn't he, children? Isn't our Oskar a fine drummer?"50

When she becomes "human," it is to Oskar to become as a child, forever inquiring, constantly experimenting, and consequently immoral. A bit of blasphemy against the world of adulthood is brought forth with a bang in this paragraph. At any rate, her words take on the same pseudo-affectedness of a pedantic, pedagogous, idiotic parrot in Dog Years; moreover, through being a parrot herself she turns the students into the same blind, ignorant, little parrot-type. When Harras sired the little dog Prinz, the little schoolboy Liebenau acquired sudden fame, and he had to tell the class about how the dog Harras had presented the "wonderful" Führer with little Prinz:

Fräulein Spollenhauer wanted to know all about it: "Why did the Herr Gauleiter make our Führer a present of the little dog Prinz?"
"Because it was the Führer's birthday and he'd always wanted a little dog from our city."
"And why is the little dog Prinz so happy on the

Obersalzberg that he isn't the least bit homesick for his mama?"
"Because our Führer loves dogs and is always kind to dogs."
"And why should we be glad that Prinz is with the Führer?"
"Because Harras belongs to his father."
"Because Harras is the little dog Prinz's father."
"And because it is a great honor for our class and our school and our beautiful city."
Were you there, Tulla, when Fräulein Spollenhauer with me and the whole class paid a visit to our carpenter shop?51

Grass has, in reducing his world of characters and settings, reduced, in turn, his three works to a unity, a unity of real, yet incredible happenings like the Black Witch, headless nuns and knights; these happenings take place in dissonant and, at the same time, harmonious extremities. He has reached the ends of two poles and pulled them together: from the fabulously fabricating fables he has extracted, without extenuating, the exuberance of exposure; he expounds upon the real, the vulgarity, the crude, and the ugly. He makes the ferocious bend to his felicitous facility in the realm of fantasy; and all this results partly in an enigma, partly in dyspepsia, but mostly in the shattering dynamite of truth.

Grass cannot let his characters escape one another, just as the horridness of it all cannot really escape; the characters hear of one another, and whether they believe what they hear

or whether they don't believe it is their decision. In a similar manner Grass leaves it to the reader as to believe or not to believe what he has read in these works. It is all a matter of free will. "... everybody in the suburb of Langfuhr knew about Jenny and Eddi, just as they all knew about a tiny little fellow with a tin drum. Except that the dwarf, whom everybody called Oskar, was reputed to be an incorrigible lone wolf."52 And Harry Liebenau says: "Years later---Tulla and I were absent---some high school boys, who were putting on a schlagball tournament, were said to have put the field manager's cat on the neck of a dozing fellow student."53

Sometimes Grass even has his characters come face to face with one another. Nevertheless, it is Eddi Amsel and Oskar Matzerath who can see more clearly than most of the remaining. As Amsel begins his task of transforming scarecrows into lifelike men, SA uniforms are needed. It is a sort of vision which comes to Amsel, a vision which holds all of the violence about to take place:

Between Amsel's oak panels brown tatters piled up: beer spots, grease spots, blood spots, tar and sweat spots gave the rags additional value in his eyes. He began at once to take measurements. He sorted, counted, piled, took his distance, dreamed of marching columns, let them march by, salute, march by, salute, looked on with screwed-up eyes: beer-hall battles, movement, tumult, men against men,

\[52\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 174.}\]

\[53\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 175.}\]
bones and table edges, eyes and thumbs, beer bottles and teeth, screams, crashing pianos, potted plants, chandeliers, and more than two hundred and fifty well-tempered knives; and yet, apart from the piled-up rags there was no one between the oak panels but Walter Matern. He was drinking a bottle of seltzer and didn't see what Eddi Amsel saw.  

Thus Oskar and Amsel have something in common: they can hear and see what others cannot hear and see. And since Grass' world is such a big, little world, why shouldn't Amsel sometimes see and hear what Oskar has seen and heard?

Tulla and I surprised Eddi Amsel and the grocer's son in a snow squall on Fröbelwiese. We were huddled under a trailer that was wintering on the Fröbelwiese. Amsel and the gnome were silhouetted like shadows against the snow flurries. No shadows could have been more different than those shadows. The gnome shadow held out his shadow drum into the snowfall. The Amsel shadow bent down. Both shadows held their ears to the drum as though listening to the sound of December snow on white-lacquered tin. Because we had never seen anything so silent, we too kept still, with frost-red ears: but all we could hear was the snow, we couldn't hear the tin.  

The name of Pilenz's, Mahlke's, and Harry Liebenau's school was the Conradinum. Oskar knew not only about the usual happenings, he also knew Jenny and Tulla. He even knew Liebenau who says the following:

... I caught up with the two girls just before Max-Halbe-Platz. Someone had usurped my place: sturdy and diminutive, the grocer's son was marching along, now beside Tulla, now beside Jenny. Occasionally he did what one else ever dared to do: he thrust himself into the empty gap. Whether he was beside Tulla, beside Jenny, or between them, his tin drum hung down

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54 Ibid., p. 190.
55 Ibid., p. 199.